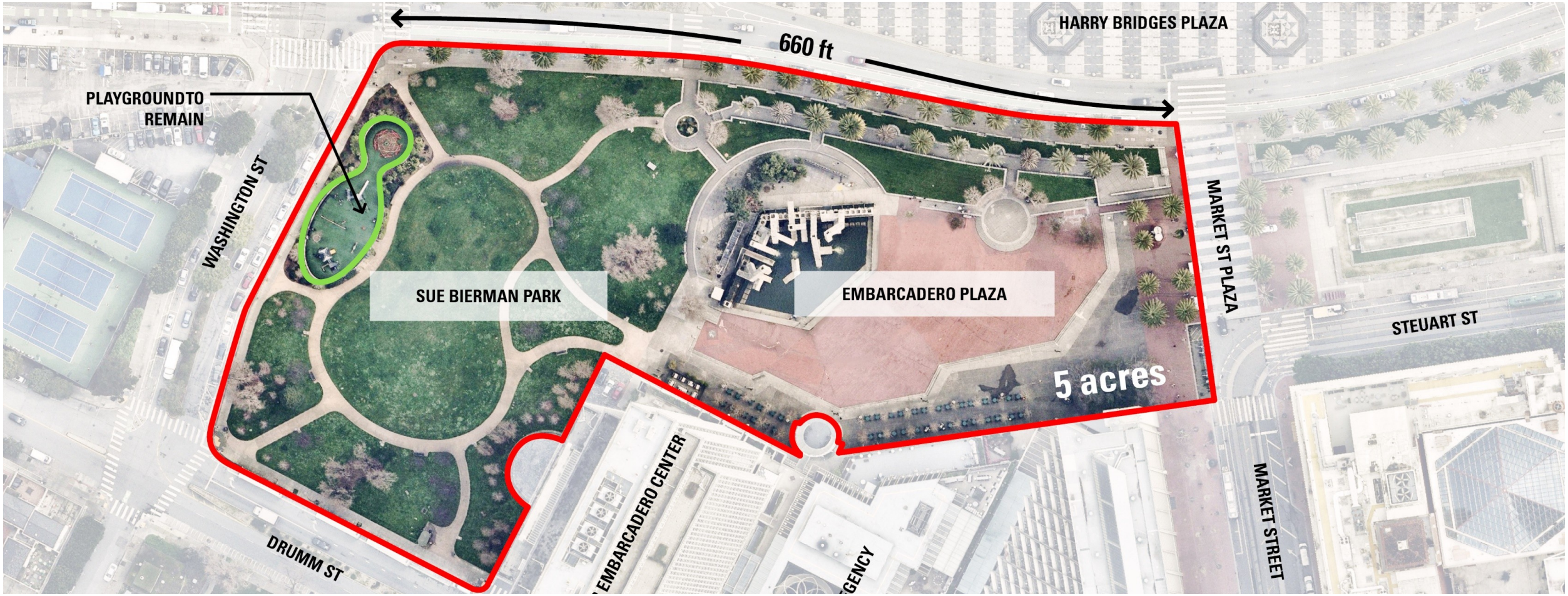
SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION & PARKS

EMBARCADERO PLAZA PROJECT

Project Governance Team | April 3, 2025

BXP DOWNTOWN SF PARTNERSHIP



AGENDA

1. Review Project Goals
5 minutes

2. Project Delivery
25 minutes

3. Communications
10 minutes

4. Funding
10 minutes

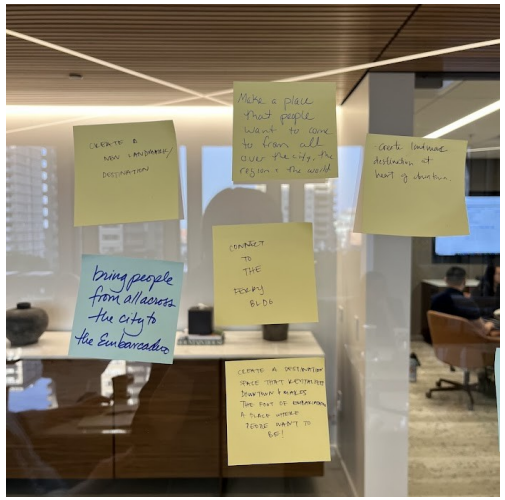
5. Steps to Concept Approval
5 minutes

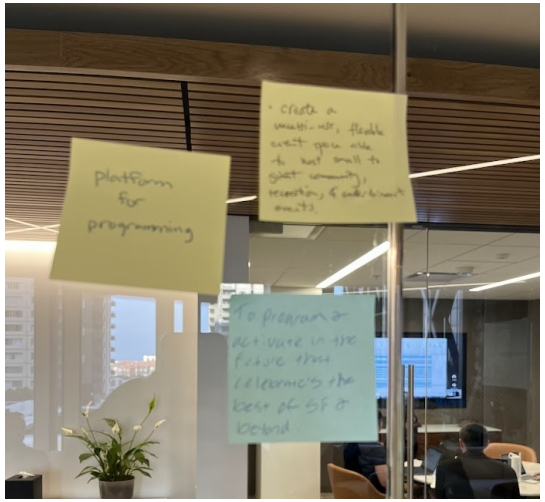
6. Next Steps
5 minutes

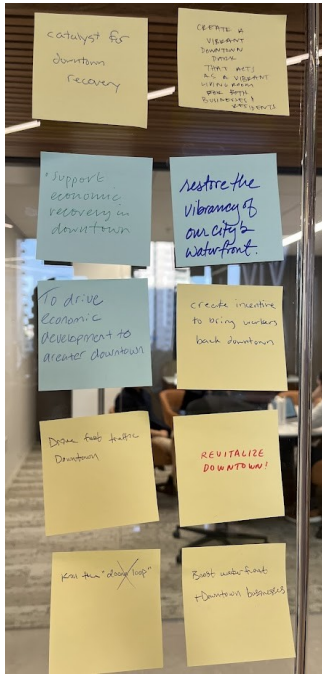
SAN FRANCISCO

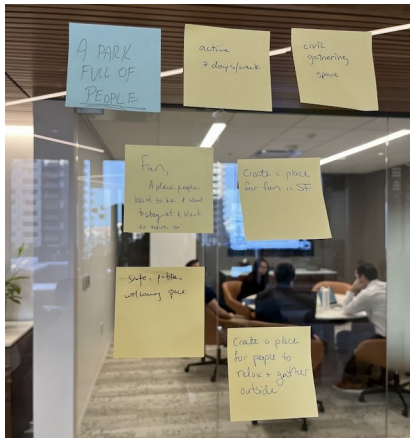
platform park
EMBARCADERO PLAZA REFRESH

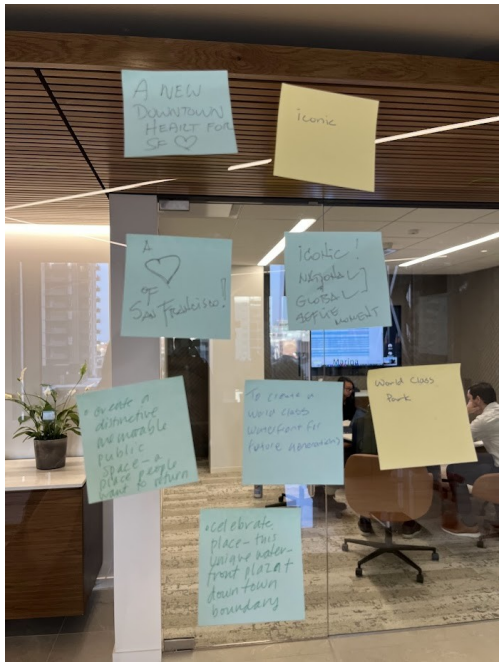
PROJECT GOALS

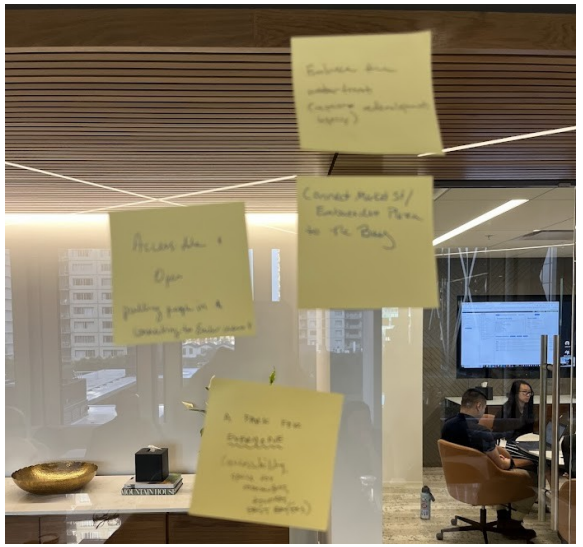

Make a place that people want to come to from all over the city, the region + the world
create landmark destination at heart of downtown
bring people from all across the city to the Embarcadero
CONNECT TO THE FERRY BLDG

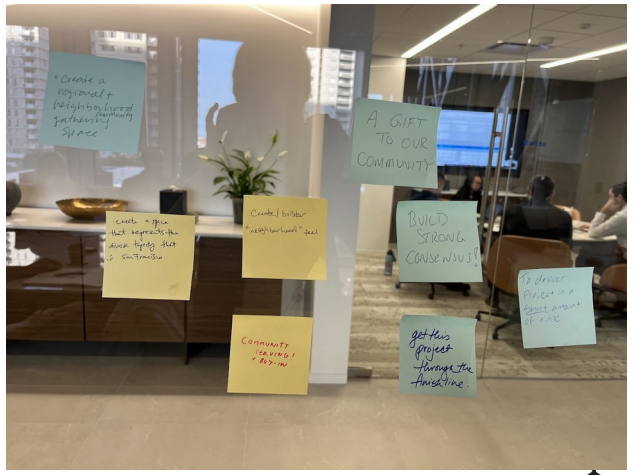



catalyst for downtown recovery
Support economic recovery in downtown
restore the vibrancy of our city's waterfront.
To drive economic development to greater downtown
create incentive to bring workers back downtown
REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN!


A PARK FULL OF PEOPLE
active + day/night
civic gathering space
Fun
Create a place for fun in SF
Create a place for people to relax + gather outside


A NEW DOWNTOWN HEART FOR SF
iconic
ICONIC!
World Class Park
To create a world class waterfront for future generations
•celebrate place - this unique waterfront plaza at downtown boundary





SURVEY REPORT OUT

1. *What are your top priorities for this renovation? (Select up to three)*

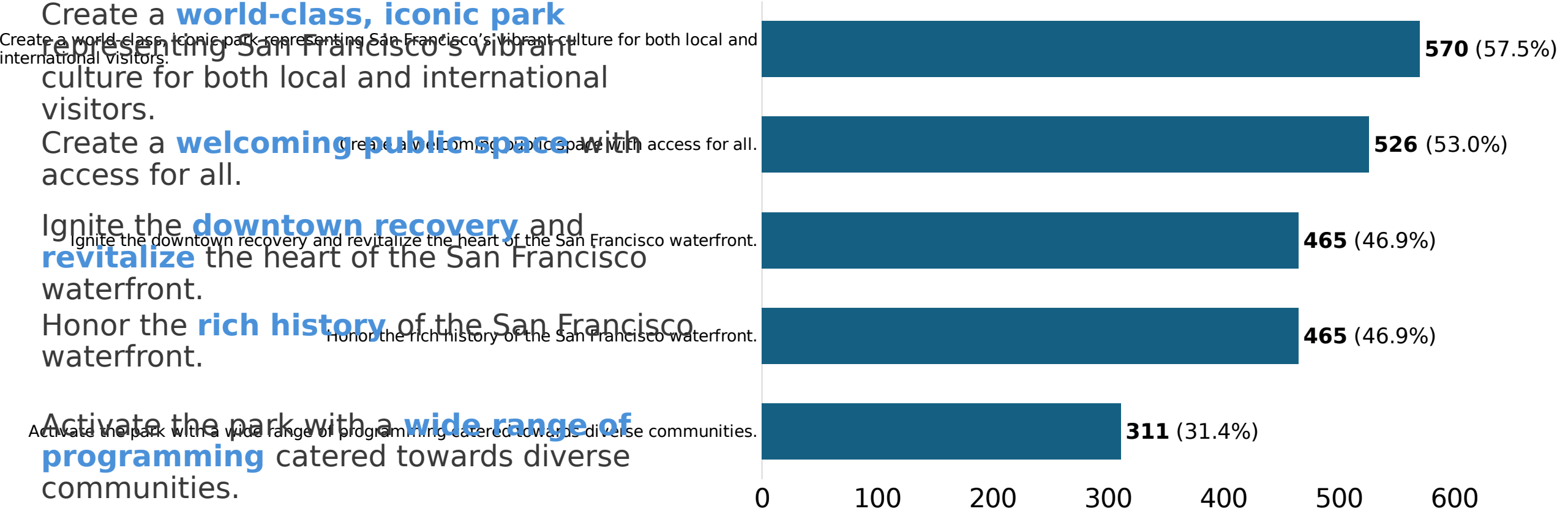
Create a **world-class, iconic park** representing San Francisco's vibrant culture for both local and international visitors.

Create a **welcoming public space** with access for all.

Ignite the **downtown recovery** and **revitalize** the heart of the San Francisco waterfront.

Honor the **rich history** of the San Francisco waterfront.

Activate the park with a **wide range of programming** catered towards diverse communities.

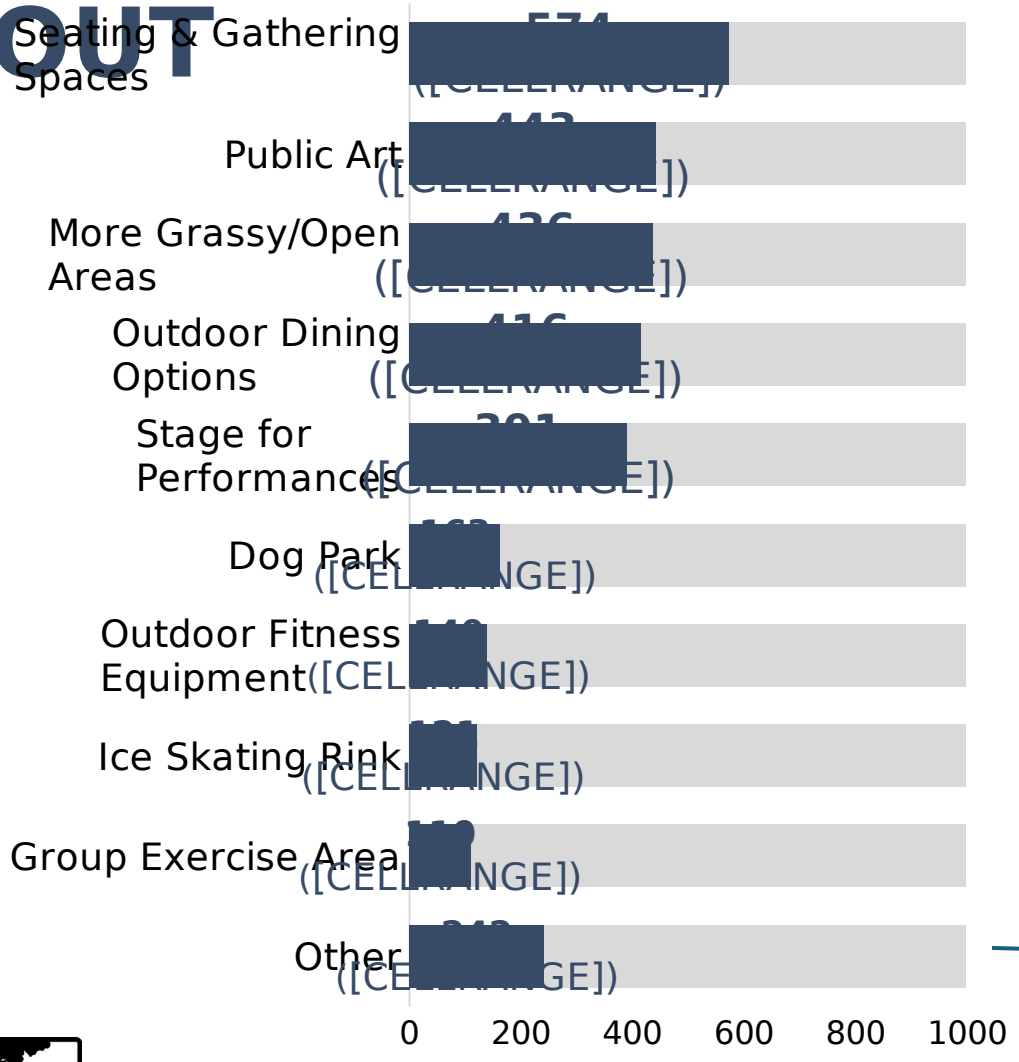

Create a world-class, iconic park representing San Francisco's vibrant culture for both local and international visitors.
570 (57.5%)
Create a welcoming public space with access for all.
526 (53.0%)
Ignite the downtown recovery and revitalize the heart of the San Francisco waterfront.
465 (46.9%)
Honor the rich history of the San Francisco waterfront.
465 (46.9%)
Activate the park with a wide range of programming catered towards diverse communities.
311 (31.4%)
0
100
200
300
400
500
600

SURVEY REPORT OUT

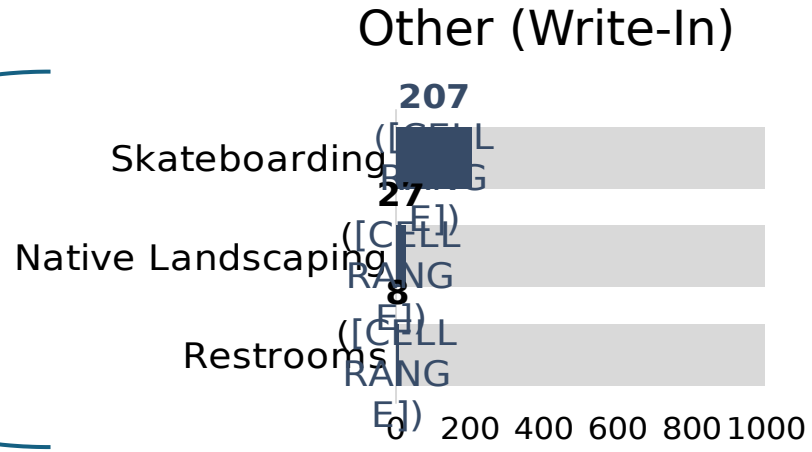
2. What current features of the park do you think are working well?

1. **Skateboarding Culture** – Many respondents praised the **skate-friendly design** (stairs, ledges, bricks), recognizing it as **iconic and culturally important**.
2. **Views & Location** – The **waterfront views**, **proximity to the Ferry Building**, and easy **access to public transit** were frequently highlighted.
3. **Playground** – The **children's play area** was seen as a good feature, with some suggesting it could be expanded.
4. **Open Space & Seating** – People appreciated the **large open area** and **public seating**.
5. **Greenery** – **Trees, shrubs**, and the **lawn** received positive mentions.
6. **Markets & Activities** – Occasional praise for **markets**, **stage events**, and **sports courts** (e.g., padel, paddle ball).
7. **Public Art & Fountain** – Mixed but some appreciated the **public art** and **fountain**, even if outdated.

SURVEY REPORT OUT



4. What new features or improvements would you like to see? Select all that apply)



SURVEY REPORT OUT

3. What is currently challenging at the site?

– Frequently mentioned as **non-functional**, **ugly**, or poorly integrated.
sness & Safety – A recurring theme, with mentions of:
s and encampments
use
essive behavior
ral feeling of **unsafety**, especially for visitors.
pe & Layout – Complaints about:
uch **concrete and brick**
inted layout
of **cohesion** in design
Amenities – Includes:
public restrooms
nough **seating or shade**
andscaping and **maintenance**
lization – Many saw the space as a **pass-through**, not a destination.
Conflicts – Some concern over **classist perceptions** (e.g., racket/pickleball courts) and crowding during **farme**

SURVEY REPORT OUT

15. Would you like to share any additional thoughts or feedback?

1. **Skateboarding Culture** – Several respondents emphasized the historic and cultural importance of the plaza to the global skateboarding community and urged the city to **preserve skateable areas**.
2. **Preserve or Replace the Fountain** – Opinions were mixed:
   - Some want the **Vaillancourt Fountain preserved or modified** with water features restored.
   - Others called for it to be **removed entirely**, describing it as outdated or an eyesore.
3. **Green Space & Beautification** – Strong support for **more greenery**, **benches**, and a **more welcoming, park-like environment** rather than vast brick/paved areas.
4. **Safety & Cleanliness** – Multiple mentions of:
   - **Homelessness and drug use**
   - Requests for **more trash cans**, **maintenance**, and **general safety improvements**.
5. **Noise & Usage** – Some neighbors expressed concern about potential noise increases; others suggested making better use of the space (e.g., regular events).
6. **Inclusion & Community** – A few responses emphasized designing for **all demographics**, with **community events** and cultural representation.
7. **Dog- and Bike-Friendly Amenities** – Requests for **dog areas**, **bike paths**, and **accommodations for skateboarders**.
8. **Simplicity & Practicality** – Some want the area to stay **simple, clean, and uncluttered**, with practical improvements like seating and shade.

CEQA DISCUSSION UPDATE

Historical Consultant (Page & Turnbull)

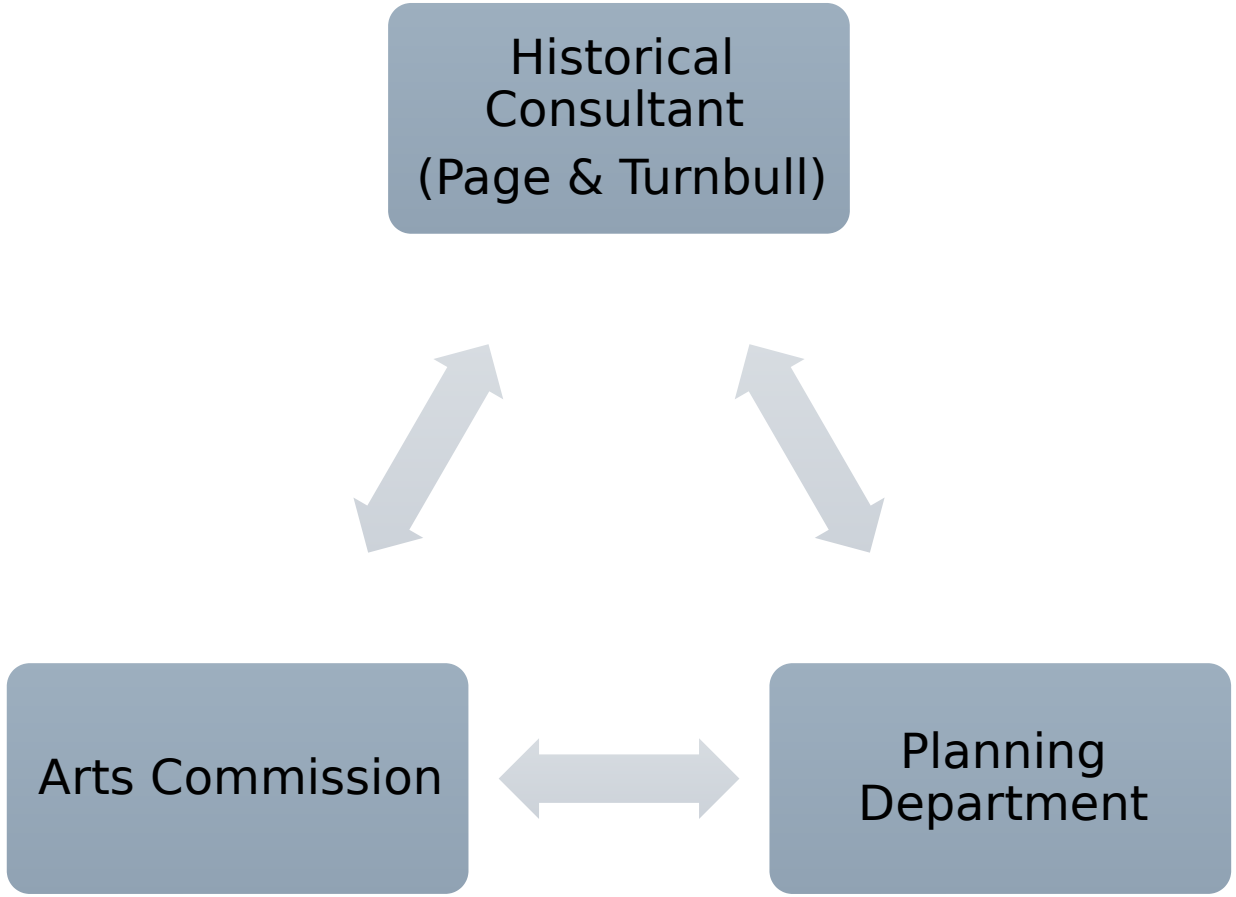
- 3/31: Historical Consultant (Page & Turnbull) Completed Historical Resource Report
- Page & Turnbull found that Vaillancourt Fountain appears to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources.
- Planning Department to review.
- 4/21: Page & Turnbull is also completing a draft HRR on Plaza, Park, and Bocce Courts

Planning Department

- 3/31: Reviewing Fountain HRR
- 4/8: RPD meeting to review HRR and CEQA Process

Arts Commission

- RPD sent contract with Armand Vaillancourt and Redevelopment Agency to Arts Commission
- Consulting with their attorney



CEQA DISCUSSION UPDATE

Hazardous Materials

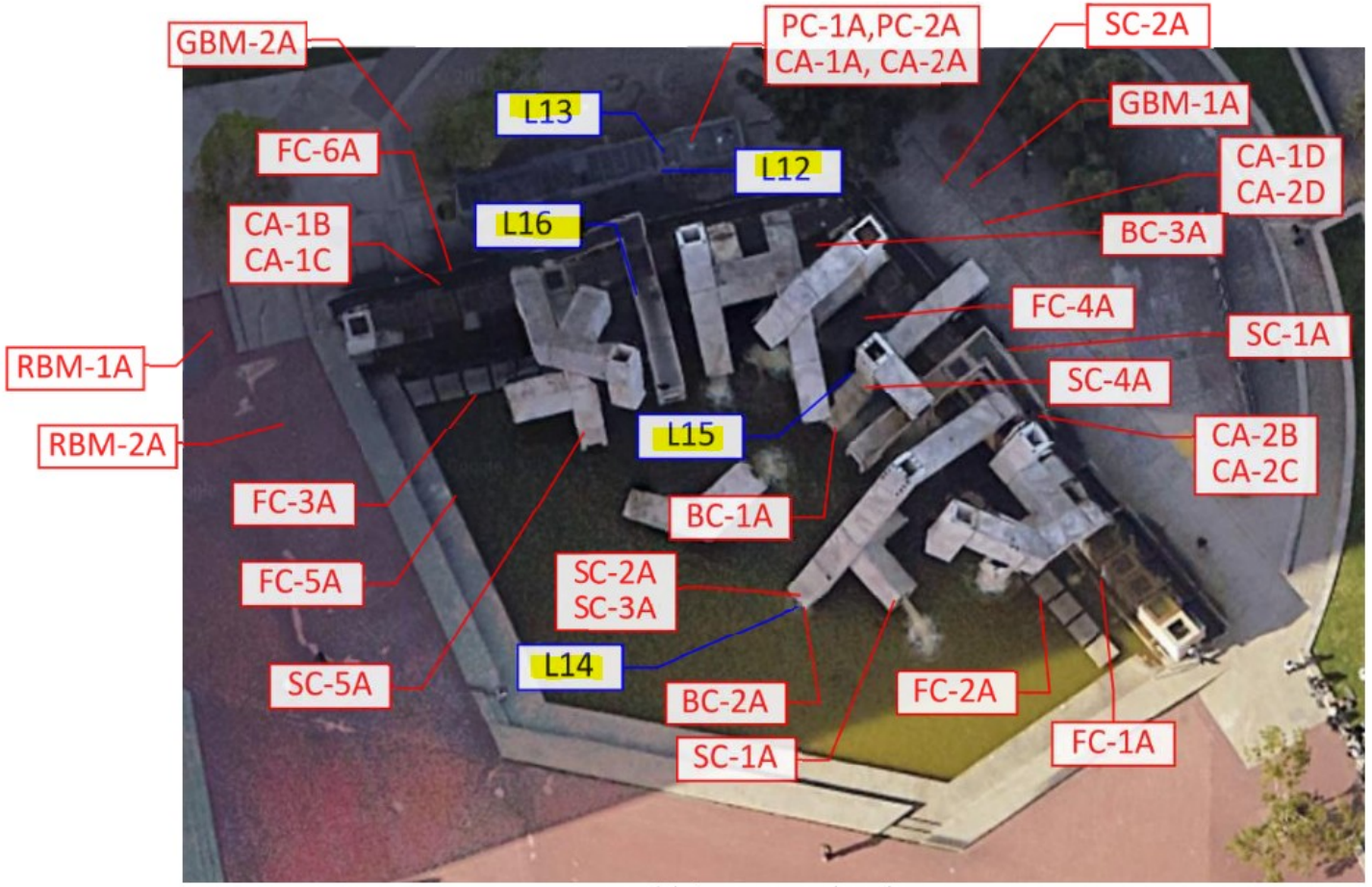
- Beige and green painted metal features tested positive for lead. See highlighted areas.
- Waterproof membrane beneath the fountain floor/basin presumed to be asbestos-containing based on construction date.

Structural Integrity

- April 21: DCI Engineers structural integrity report

Accessibility

- March 3: Site visit conducted with the Disability Access Coordinator (DAC).
  - Identified tripping hazards, uneven pavement, steps, and missing truncated domes at right-of-ways, rendering current conditions non-compliant with ADA regulations.
- Ongoing topographic survey will provide the DAC with further details on compliance issues.



*photos source: google earth

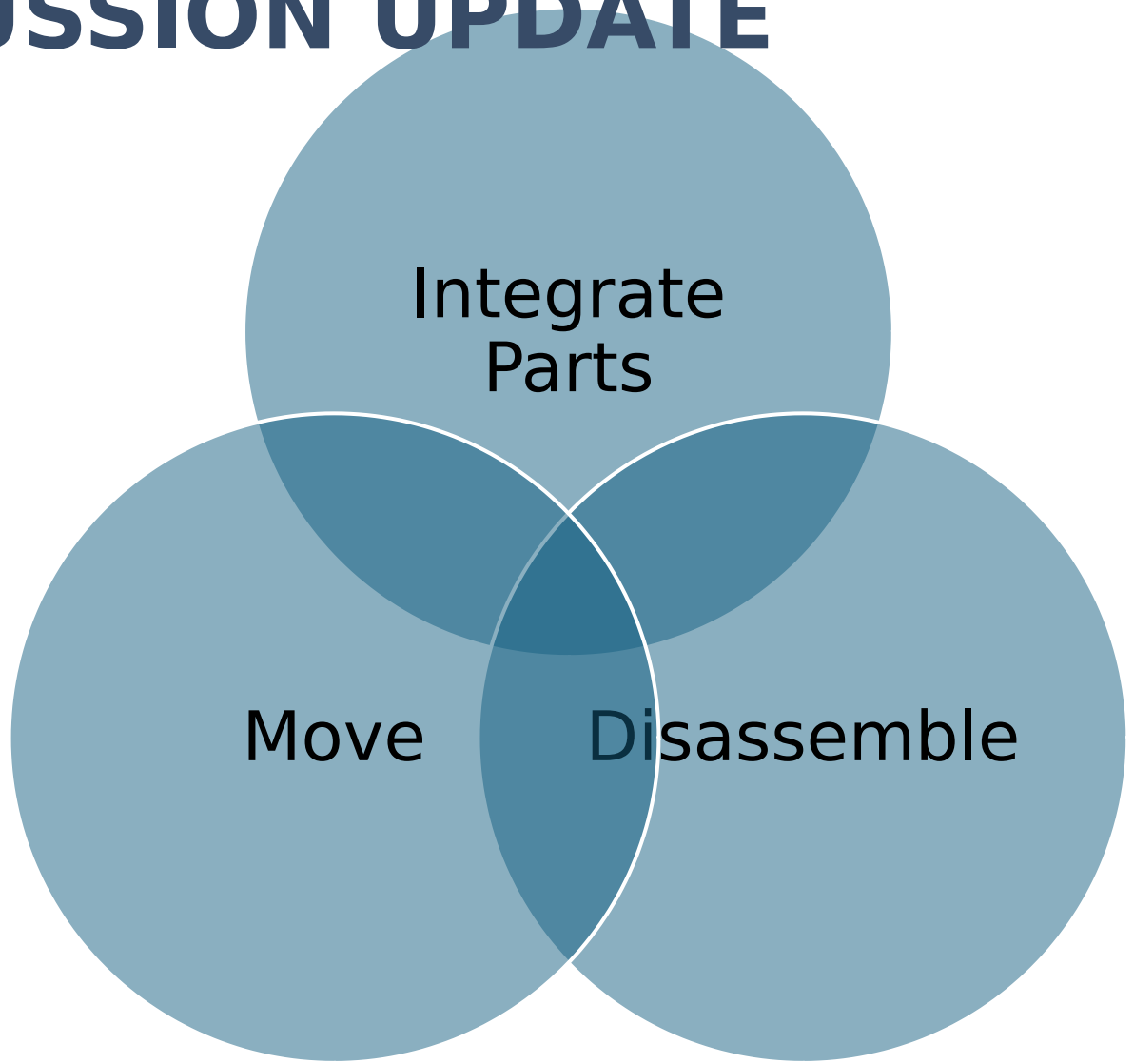
CEQA DISCUSSION UPDATE

Structural Integrity

Art Integrity

Hazardous Materials

Litigation



SKATEBOARD REQUEST

Not a skatepark, not a purpose-built skate plaza: an urban park that welcomes everyone.

Part of this rim around the fountain, which is not only part of Halprin's original 1971 footprint, but is one of the only parts of the plaza still skated today

Keeping that, and allowing it to be used by skateboarders, pays tribute to the history of the plaza and its cultural significance within skateboarding, while also incorporating skateboarding within a larger set of productive uses for the new plaza

COMMUNITY MEETING SERIES

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING, CONTEXT, VISION, AUDIENCE, PROGRAMMING

HIGH LEVEL PROGRAM MIXES AND ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGRAMS, PROS/CONS

PREFERRED CONCEPT PRESENTATION

COMMUNITY MEETING #2

Design Decision	Option A	Option B	Trade-Off / Opportunity Cost
1. **Skateboarding**	Integrate new	Keep existing element	Inclusive vs. central
2. **Vaillancourt Fountain**	Remove	Keep parts	Opens space vs. keeps history/art
3. **Landscaping**	More grass	More pavement/native planting	Flexible recreation vs. biodiversity or circulation
4. **Noise Zones**	Quiet areas	Loud/active areas	Peaceful vibe vs. vibrant programming
5. **Stage Design**	Temporary/small	Permanent/large	Flexibility vs. dedicated performance space
6. **Dog Area**	Small edge zone	Central	Controlled use vs. more pet-friendly but space-intensive
7. **Program Adjacency**	Separated uses	Integrated uses	Clear zones vs. dynamic overlaps
8. **Flexibility & Access**	Mostly flexible/open	More fixed/specialized	Adapts over time vs. purpose-built spaces

STEPS TO CONCEPT APPROVAL

CEQA

CA Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental review by the Planning Department / Commission.
Possible appeals to the Board of Supervisors

ASSESSMENT REPORTS

Site survey, Geotechnical report, Hazardous materials assessment, Sewer lateral scoping

RPD STAKEHOLDER REVIEWS

RPD Internal
Structural Maintenance Yard (SMY) Review, Park Service Area Review

Disability Access Coordinator (DAC)
Site Walk and Review

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public Meeting #1
Discuss needs with Community. Get Feedback

Public Meeting #2
Provide ideas. Get Feedback

Public Meeting #3
Final Concept Plan. Get Feedback

CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW

Conceptual Presentation
For projects over $5M

COST ESTIMATE

Cost Estimate, Cost Estimate Reconciliation

CONCEPT DESIGN APPROVAL

RPD Commission
Rec & Park Capital Committee Meeting, Full Commission Meeting, occurs monthly

Next:

Let’s discuss!

NEXT STEPS

- Community Meeting #2 Meeting Date
- Stakeholder Meetings/Follow-ups
  - 4/3: Interagency meeting with Port, MTA, Port
  - Arts Commission
  - Skateboarder Follow-up

COMMUNITY MEETING #2

Original design without skateboarders versus integrating Skateboarders,
Original Design without Vaillancourt fountain versus keeping parts of theFountain,
More grassy areas versus more pavement versus more native planting,
Loud areas versus quiet areas
Stage design and it’s location and size in the park it’s Felxibility and use whether it’s temporary or permanent
Dog play area design size and location
Adjacencies between programs
Sizes of programs
Accessibility
What’s flexible and what’s permanent
How can the grassy lawn provide these benefits